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ABSTRACT

Presented in a question-and-answer format, this guide is designed to answer the questions of persons who have agreed to become mentors for students in school-to-work programs. The guide answers the following 12 questions: (1) Why am I here? (2) What is mentoring all about? (3) What does mentoring have to do with School-to-Work? (4) Where do I fit into all this? (5) What are some of the qualities of a successful mentor? (6) What are some of the good things that come out of mentoring programs? (7) How can I be sure we start off on the right foot? (8) Are there certain questions I can expect from the student? (9) What aren't you telling me? (10) Are there some pitfalls and obstacles to avoid? (10) How do I teach them to do the job? (11) What else do need to know about teaching? and (12) What about feedback? (KC)

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Mentoring:
Making a Difference for Tomorrow's Workers

A Handbook for Business and Industry Personnel involved in School-to-Work Programs

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Mentoring: Making a Difference for Tomorrow's Workers

A Handbook for Business and Industry Personnel involved in School-to-Work Programs

PACE is a business and education consortium involving the seven school districts of Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties, local businesses and industries, Tri-County Technical College, The Career and Technology Center of Anderson School Districts One and Two, Clemson University, the Anderson and Oconee Business and Education Partnerships, and the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University.

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We are delighted to have you working with us!

First, thank you for agreeing to be a "Mentor" in a School-to-Work program! You probably have lots of questions about your new role as a mentor . . . like what is expected of you, what to expect from your student, and what School-to-Work programs are really all about. This guide is designed to answer these questions and others you may not have thought of yet! Please take a few minutes to read through this guide. It will help you prepare for what lies ahead in your new role as a mentor.

Why am I here?

Your business or industry has volunteered to get involved in a School-to-Work activity with an area middle or high school. School-to-Work programs typically include student shadowing, internships, mentoring, cooperative education, and youth apprenticeships. These programs are an excellent means for students to gain exposure to the world of work, learn job-related skills, and explore various career paths. Being in the classroom isn't enough anymore; students need to actually experience the workplace first-hand!

What is Mentoring all about?

Mentoring is a relationship between a student and an adult (mentor) who guides and helps the student in the workplace, especially in the area of career exploration, teaching technical skills, and demonstrating the relationship between academic preparation and workplace readiness. But, more than that, a true mentor offers challenging ideas, helps build self-confidence, encourages professional behavior, teaches by example, and offers encouragement to the student!

What does Mentoring have to do with School-to-Work?

The School-to-Work experiences described earlier can be greatly enhanced through the involvement of a workplace mentor. As mentioned previously, mentors teach students more than just technical and job-specific skills. In fact, the mentor can have a significant impact on the self-esteem, personal growth and work ethic of the student.

Where do I fit into all this?

You have volunteered or been chosen to be a mentor because of your exceptional knowledge, skills, abilities, and work ethic. These are the same qualities and attributes that need to be instilled in students participating in School-to-Work activities!

What are some of the qualities that make a successful Mentor?

Why, the very things that describe you!...

- Highly respected
- Experienced in your field
- Kind and patient
- Good motivator
- Teaching ability
- Excellence on the job
- Reflective of company values
- Strong work ethic
- Flexible

What are the roles a Mentor plays?

As a mentor, you will wear many hats...and play many roles! Some are . . .

The Communicator . . .

- Listens to the concerns and questions of the student
- Provides an open environment for interaction
- Schedules uninterrupted time regularly
- Serves as a sounding board for ideas/concerns

The Counselor . . .

- Helps evaluate career options with the student
- Assists in planning to reach personal goals
- Demonstrates commitment to the student

The Coach . . .

- Sets mutual goals for the mentoring relationship
- Helps clarify performance goals on the job
- Teaches technical and other skills
- Evaluates performance
- Identifies developmental needs
- Serves as a role model
- Teaches work ethics

The Advisor . . .

- Introduces the student to the workplace
- Helps identify obstacles to career progression
- Communicates the realities of the world of work
- Reviews progress on a regular basis
- Plans activities and experiences for student
- Teaches company policies and procedures

The Primary Contact . . .

- Networks for student
- Intervenes on behalf of student
- Provides a link with educational/employment opportunities

- Identifies resources
- Arranges involvement in appropriate activities
- Communicates organizational goals/objectives

Sounds like a lot of work, so what are some of the good things that come out of mentoring programs?

It sounds like a lot of work, but effective mentoring can have wonderful results, both expected and unexpected!
Some include...

- Promoting respect, self-management, integrity, and honesty
- Elevating the confidence level of the student
- Fostering a strong work ethic that will last a lifetime
- Building practical views and realistic expectations of the real world of work
- Having the satisfaction of making a real difference in the life of a student

How can I be sure we start off on the right foot and have a successful experience?

It is important to get off to a great start with the student. The beginning of your relationship will set the "tone" for the whole experience! Be sure to try to incorporate as many of the following suggestions as possible:

- Plan for the student's arrival! What will you have them do? What experiences should they have?
- Meet with the student to plan activities, share expectations, and set goals. (It is important to do this on the first day if at all possible!)
- Introduce the student to the staff.
- Tour the facility with the student.
- Listen to and answer questions.
- Offer guidance to the student.

- Don't get too personal.
- Contact the appropriate person if it isn't working out.

Speaking of questions, are there certain questions I can expect from the student?

Your student will be coming to you for advice and information, as well as specific job training. Be patient! Remember, the student is exploring career opportunities and your answers will likely have an impact on the decision-making process! You can expect these types of questions, and possibly more:

- What career opportunities are available?
- What education is required after high school?
- What are the working conditions?
- What is the salary range for this occupation?
- What are the hours?
- What personal qualities are employers looking for in an employee?
- What do you need to have when you apply for a position here (resume, application form, references, etc.)?
- What do you like most about the job?
- What do you like least about the job?
- What opportunities are there for advancement?
- What advice can you offer as I consider my career choices and opportunities?

O.K., sounds good, but what AREN'T you telling me?

Just keep in mind that your student is a kid, not an adult. Although the student is recommended by teachers and carefully prepared for the workplace experience, he or she is STILL a teenager! So, it is fair to assume you might experience any of the following teenage "phenomena:"

- Moodiness
- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of self-confidence
- Getting "a little big for their britches"
- Not always attentive to safety issues
- Lack of motivation

Are there some pitfalls and obstacles to avoid?

Despite anyone's best efforts, sometimes the relationship just doesn't work out! If you think this is the case with you and your student, be sure to notify your School-to-Work Coordinator. There are many possible reasons, and here are some you should be aware of and watch out for:

- A bad match between mentor and student
- Communication problems
- Unrealistic expectations from both parties
- Too much time away from the regular work activities of the mentor
- Problems taking the initiative
- Problems ending the relationship

Enough about relationships! . . . How do I teach them to do the job?

A lot of your time will be spent actually teaching specific job skills to the student. There are specific learning goals the student is expected to acheive during the work-based learning experience. These goals (competencies) will be identifed during the planning phase and communicated to you so you can plan your training accordingly.

Competency-based instruction is the preferred teaching method for School-to-Work programs, especially in co-op, internship, and apprenticeship activites. A "competency" is

simply the ability to successfully perform a specific task to meet a specific standard or job requirement. Remember, competencies . . .

- Should be organized into a sequence of steps
- Are measurable (In many cases, you can tell if the student did it right by watching him/her perform each step!)
- Should be connected to what the student is learning at school
- Start simple and build

What else do I need to know about teaching?

Your teaching technique will vary depending on the task, but a good rule of thumb is the five-step method . . .

1. Tell the student . . . explain the skill to be learned.
2. Show the student . . . demonstrate the skill.
3. Do it with the student . . . do it together!
4. Have the student teach back . . . let the student "tell" the skill back to you, as you did in the first step.
5. Have the student show back . . . let the student demonstrate the skill, as you did in the second step!

What about feedback?

Feedback is vital to the success of School-to-Work programs. Your School-to-Work Coordinator will give you forms that should be used to evaluate the performance of your student. The types of things you will be evaluating are...

- Skill Level
- Mastery of Competencies
- Attitude
- Punctuality
- Cooperation
- Enthusiasm

- Courtesy
- Proper Attire
- Willingness to accept guidance
- Willingness to conform to rules and regulations
- Overall rating of the mentoring experience
- Suggestions for improvement of the mentoring program

Hopefully, you feel confident and ready for the challenge of being a mentor to a student. Remember, the work of a mentor can have a positive, life-long impact on the life of a student. Now is your chance to make a real difference!

Thank you for being a part of this important activity.

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